



Your Town, Your Plan

Why a Master Plan?

A comprehensive municipal master plan will be developed in Arlington to serve as the Town's primary policy statement on future physical development in Arlington. The process involves public participation to set goals and communicate a long-term shared vision, followed by a review of current trends relative to land use, economic strength, housing, open space, recreation, natural, cultural and historic resources, transportation, population, demographics, public facilities, and includes steps to implement the plan. Each element of the master plan is inter-related, for example economic development may depend on transportation; increased housing can lead to increased demand for services. The legal basis for master planning in Massachusetts is provided in Chapter 41, Section 81D of Massachusetts General Law. This act encourages Planning Boards to create Master Plans to "provide a basis for decision making regarding the long term physical development of the Municipality."



Why Now?

We face fiscal challenges, changing demographics, and an increasingly competitive future for jobs, education, and resources. The people of Arlington have differing opinions, but we also share common values that can shape a vision for future. **That vision must be reflected in Arlington's future investments and actions.**

Change on public and private property happens, whether we like it or not. Choosing to do nothing won't freeze Arlington the way it is. **Planning will help us anticipate and guide change to keep what's great about Arlington and make the most of opportunities that meet our needs.**

We can be content to sit back and react, or we can plan for what we want in the future. **Sitting back and reacting to development decisions creates anxiety, mistrust, and suspicion when change occurs.**

We have a structural deficit, and only 4% of our tax base is non-residential. **Our next steps have to be coordinated to address this trend.**

Public dismay can occur when major public improvements are undertaken or private property owners decide to redevelop. Anxiety and animosity can cost everyone extra money and time. **Having a master plan is more fiscally prudent, efficient and predictable than addressing improvements and development on an ad-hoc basis.**

Communities with master plans have better bond ratings, get bonus points on grants, and send positive message to businesses considering Arlington.



The elements of a comprehensive master plan are described below

Goals and Policies: A statement of goals and policies will be developed to guide future improvements and development. An interactive public process will be used to determine Arlington's community values and goals and to identify patterns of development and improvements which will be consistent with the goals and policies.



Land Use: A plan will be developed to identify present land uses, determine future desired development and improvements, review and recommend zoning changes, and designate the inter-relationship of public and private land uses.



Housing: This element analyzes existing and projected housing needs including programs to preserve and increase affordability, housing stock, and to create housing opportunities for all.



Economic Development: This element of the master plan will identify and develop policies and strategies to strengthen Arlington's businesses, to diversify and expand the business base by building on our strengths, and to propose methods to bring in businesses matched with Arlington's trade and professional skills. It will also examine ways to introduce new businesses consistent with current trends such as Green Communities, R&D, and technology enterprises.



Natural and Cultural Resources: Arlington's cultural, ethnic, creative, artistic, historical, and natural assets are analyzed in this master plan element. Policies and strategies to protect, educate and enjoy these resources will be identified and developed.



Open Space and Recreation: This element provides an inventory of recreational and open space areas of the Town and identifies priorities for management, protection, and expansion of recreation and open space as well as resources and strategies for implementation.



Public Facilities and Services: This is a major master plan element that updates the status, inventory, and challenges of meeting current and future demand for services and public facilities. This element includes schools, libraries, facilities and buildings for public works, council on aging, police, fire, EMS, and public parking.



Transportation: Included in this element is an inventory of existing and proposed transportation systems: pedestrian, automobile, bicycle, public transit, and trucking. Strategies to address future mobility needs, maintenance, and priorities for improvement of existing transportation infrastructure will be developed.



Implementation: This element proposes a program of actions necessary to achieve the objectives for each element of the master plan. Schedules, responsible party, and costs (and revenue, if applicable) in a summary capital expenditure program will be developed. Specific processes to amend the Town's regulatory structure to ensure consistency with the master plan will be presented in the implementation element.

The Master Plan will take between 18 months and two years to complete. The first step was an interactive, community workshop held October 17, 2012 in the Town Hall Auditorium to hear from Arlington's broad and varied voices on shared values that will form the goals and policies of the Master Plan. A professional Master Plan Consultant will work with the Arlington Master Plan Committee to engage the public in the development of the Master Plan and implementation program. The Master Plan must then be officially adopted by the Arlington Redevelopment Board. The Master Plan will also be brought to Town Meeting for endorsement.

Updates on this project can be found online at arlingtonma.gov/planning